

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council

Application ID: 13AC145129

Program Name: Western Dairyland Fresh Start

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The applicant effectively defines and describes the community problem to be addressed both in terms of the need for new housing units and the need to provide a well-planned vocational training program for at-risk youth by citing Federal Reserve sources and national United States Census data.

(+) The applicant supports the selection of this targeted population by indicating that two essential economic gains will be realized at the end of the Fresh Start initiative: at-risk youth will complete education and gain valuable service experience, and the community will gain by having additional housing.

(+) The design of the program, with the AmeriCorps members being both beneficiary and service providers, is logical support for the premise that the goals of the program could not be carried out without the proposed activities of the Members.

(+) By providing at-risk youth with the skills, training, and education to build and rehabilitate homes, the applicant does an excellent job in demonstrating that the program design meets dual needs by both enhancing the career and educational opportunities for the at-risk youth and providing housing to the target community.

(+) The applicant provides very strong evidence-based and evidence-supported data that describes the basis for the skill development of the AmeriCorps members such as Boy Scout Empowered Leadership Program, the Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience (COPE), and strategies with the local technical college.

(+) The overall change the applicant expects at the end of the three-year cycle is expressed in outcome measures relating to employment, education, and the completion of new and rehabilitated homes that are impressive and well-quantified.

(+) The applicant provided comprehensive statistics from a successful 2012 Fresh Start initiative demonstrating 100% success rates for the at-risk youth in the areas of education, finance, and career development, making a persuasive case for the anticipated success of this program

(+) The applicant clearly describes how performance will be measured and monitored through a detailed evaluation plan that incorporates data collection monthly, quarterly, and at the end of the year. A key feature is that the applicant will collect data related to the program participants for the five years following their completion of the program to measure the long-term impact of the program.

(-) The strength of the local data to support the extent and severity of the need is insufficient and does not adequately address the needs of the identified Hmong group.

(-) The applicant's projections for a total of four homes to be rehabilitated during the three-year term did not meet their targeted projection. The initial estimate given was for four homes to be rehabbed during each year of the project with an anticipated total of 12 homes being rehabilitated.

(-) The applicant does not provide sufficient information to reflect whether the number of proposed slots (10 MSY/20 actual) or the choice of the slots as part-time aligns with the program design and activities.